

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PORT A 01314 021858Z

64

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-15 AID-20 RSR-01

/110 W

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R 021700Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6803

INFO SECDEF

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT AU PRINCE 1314

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, HA

SUBJ: NEW COMMISSION ESTABLISHED TO INVESTIGATE
NATIONAL PALACE FIRE

REF: P-AU-P 1247

1. PRESS JULY 31 REPORTS TEXT OF COMMUNIQUE SIGNED BY SECSTATE FOR INFORMATION AND COORDINATION FRITZ CINEAS ANNOUNCING PRESIDENT DUVALIER HAS FORMED "A NEW CIVIL-MILITARY COMMISSION" TO DETERMINE CAUSES OF FIRE IN NATIONAL PALACE ARMORY JULY 23. NEW COMMISSION IS COMPRISED OF: BRETON NAZAIRE, SECSTATE FOR INTERIOR AND NATIONAL DEFENSE; LUC DESIR, CHIEF OF THE SECRET POLICE; LT. GEN. CLAUDE RAYMOND, CHIEF OF ARMED FORCES GENERAL STAFF; BRIG GENS. BRETON CLAUDE, GRACIA JAQUES, AND JEAN-BAPTISTE HILAIRE; MICHEL AUGUST, PRESIDENT OF THE LEGISLATIVE CHAMBER; AMBASSADOR PAUL BLANCHET; AND MAJOR JEAN VALME, DESSALINES BATTALION.

2. DROPPED FROM FORMER INVESTIGATIVE COMMISSION ESTABLISHED SHORTLY AFTER FIRE, (REFTEL) ARE THREE OFFICERS OF THE PRESIDENTIAL GUARD: COL. JEAN THOMAS, LT. COL. SERGE COICOU, AND LT. COL. FRANCIS CHARLES, PLUS ARMY CO. PIERRE CHARLES-LOUIS AND TWO COMMANDERS OF THE PALACE VSN DETACHMENT;
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PAGE 02 PORT A 01314 021858Z

HERVE JEANTY AND OLAF ANTOINE. AUGUSTE, BLANCHET,

AND MAJ. VALME ARE NEW ADDITIONS TO COMMISSION.
AUGUSTE AND BLANCHET ARE BOTH "OLD GUARD" DUVALIERISTS NOT
PREVIOUSLY KNOWN FOR ANY SPECIAL CONNECTION WITH SECURITY
MATTERS. MAJ VALME IS AN AIDE OF DESSALINES BATTALION COM-
MANDER BRETON CLAUDE.

3. COMMENT: REPLACEMENT OF PRESIDENTIAL GUARD OFFICERS
ORIGINALLY APPOINTED TO INVESTIGATIVE COMMISSION SUGGESTS
THAT PRESIDENT JEAN-CLAUDE DUVALIER MAY NOW FEEL OFFICERS
OF THE PRESIDENTIAL GUARD ARE NOT ABOVE SUSPICION IN
CONNECTION WITH FIRE. CERTAINLY MANY IN PORT-AU-PRINCE
WILL INTERPRET CHANGE OF COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP THAT WAY.
APPOINTMENT OF THOMAS AND COICOU TO THE ORIGINAL COMMISSION
WAS IN FACT RATHER STRANGE, SINCE THEY WERE THE TWO OFFICERS
DIRECTLY IN CHARGE OF THE MUNITIONS DEPOT BENEATH THE PALACE
WHICH BLEW UP JULY 23.
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